

# **Benjamin Franklin**

## ***Forefather of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dog Training***

**By Jack Jagoda**

When Benjamin Franklin suggested hanging a key from a kite string to “capture” electricity from the sky, he could not have predicted the same energy would be stored and modulated to be an effective training aid for your dog.



The earliest electrical shock collars were just that: voltage from a car battery was used to correct dogs from chasing mountain lions. It does seem a little harsh, but probably less so than being caught and eaten by a mountain lion!

Training collars have truly evolved over the years from a large, bulky tool of remote punishment to the highly sophisticated training instrument we have today. Modern remote trainers (or e-trainers, to be totally current) produce variable stimulation (18 or more levels adjustable on the fly) delivered instantaneously that can last a few milliseconds or up to 10 seconds, as determined at the transmitter. These signals can be transmitted for distances of a mile or more.

I can remember quite vividly my first attempt with the collar (1979). I had a pretty nice gundog named, “Jake”. I had a few issues with Jake responding to the whistle at long distances. The collar was the rage of the day and I was in line with the rest of the boys to get one. I could not wait to get the collar and rushed out to give it a try as soon as I got it. I strapped it on Jake and went out for our daily training session. I sent Jake on a retrieve anticipating his normal slow stop to the whistle. I blew the whistle and Jake started to turn slowly and face me. I mashed the transmitter button anticipating instant success. As I hit the button Jake headed for the woods at the far end of the field. I tried to get him back but he wouldn't come. To make matters worse I hit him with the collar several times hoping it would make him come. A few minutes later I saw Jake sneaking through



the woods back to the house. I was so mortified about what I had done to my dog that I didn't use the collar for several years.

Early models were large, quite cumbersome and intimidating to the dog. To further complicate matters the stimulation produced by the collar was strong and painful, and continuous for seconds. This was the era in which the collar got the bad press.

The advent of the invisible fence has helped temper the feelings of the public toward electronic training in America. Most European countries still are negative towards the application. My partner, Phyllis Giroux DVM, and I conducted several clinics in Europe and were greeted with mixed emotions. Dr Giroux made several presentations to the Veterinary Advisory Council to the English Parliament a few years ago which resulted in great interest and wider acceptance of the collar in England.

I suspect that my first introduction was the same as most other amateur trainers. The good news is that “we have come a long way baby”. The equipment has changed dramatically. The current collars fit in the palm of your hand and are equipped with variable levels of stimulation. Today we also have lots of written material to help you with the process.

The benefits of using a remote trainer to train your dog are:

- 1) the intensity of the stimulation is adjusted before training actually begins, and it is mild enough for the dog to perceive the stimulation without intimidating or scaring him
- 2) the electrical stimulation is unique, and consistent, so will not be affected by your mood or coordination, nor will your dog acclimate to it (like pulling on his leash)
- 3) the signal you send to your dog is received instantly-- there is no time delay
- 4) the dog will receive the signal regardless of distance, and will therefore develop a healthy respect for you whether on or off lead

Modern collars are very effective delivering lightning fast stimulation tuned precisely to compliment your dog's individual size and temperament.





I typically use traditional methods to teach the basic commands such as sit, heel, and come, and then use the remote trainer to reinforce these commands. The dog understands what is expected but now you have a reliable and instantaneous way to communicate that this is what you want and you want it now.

Do I think that all dogs must be trained with remote trainers to be effective gundogs? No, but I consider it an invaluable training aid that allows me to teach very advanced skills and concepts to my dogs in a relatively short amount of time, as compared to how long it took in the days before sophisticated remote trainers were available.

A reliable Remote Trainer can be purchased at a cost of \$150-\$300. Be sure to purchase a collar with both momentary and continuous stimulation and be sure it is water proof. I prefer Tri-tronics collars for their precise timing, durability and features.

In the coming months I will show you how to collar condition your retriever for come, sit, and hold. If you have any question on which collar and brand is right for your dog please don't hesitate to contact me.



*Feel free to contact Jack with questions: [JMJagoda@aol.com](mailto:JMJagoda@aol.com) or call 540 809-7980*

*Deep Run Farm, is a retriever Training, Breeding and Boarding facility in Goldvein, VA. Jack and his partner Phyllis Giroux, DVM are living their lifetime dream. Visit them on the web at [DeepRunRetrievers.com](http://DeepRunRetrievers.com).*